



March 9, 2023

Dear Chairman Gresko and Honorable Members of the Environment Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill 1148 as a Connecticut farmer – perhaps the ultimate “endangered species” in our state. On behalf of myself and three generations of the Jones family, farming 530 acres in Shelton and Monroe, **I urge support of SB1148.**

I have a lifelong passion for protecting our natural resources and have worked collaboratively with farmers, our Department of Agriculture, DEEP, City of Shelton, Shelton Land Trust, and Aquarion Water Company to help establish a 2000-acre greenway around our farm in the Means Brook Valley.

Our acreage allows us to have a sustainable farm with the environmental benefits of crop rotations for our berries, vegetables, Christmas trees, and vineyards. Thousands of families and school children come to enjoy harvesting their own fresh crops.

To provide a sustainable future, a key policy for Connecticut must be to maintain a healthy ecosystem for people and for nature. Simply put, if the bear population is not managed properly, some crops will be destroyed. I speak from a lifetime of experience - 76 years of stewarding our land. In the 1960s, white-tailed deer population increased after many decades of sparse numbers. At first, the State of CT was slow to allow adequate hunting and crop damage permits to curtail the ever increasing deer herd. Crop damage became serious, deer collisions on our highways increased, and forest succession was upset as too many deer destroyed the growth of young native species of trees and shrubs.

Eventually our DEEP adopted sustainable strategies to manage the deer population. We must do the same with bears! In the words of R. Buckminster Fuller, “We are called to be architects of the future, not its victim.”

Let us be smart as we care for our natural and human ecosystems!

To further share my philosophy, I have attached a recent OpEd published in CT Hearst papers this February, *A Valentine to Our Mother Earth*.

Respectfully submitted,

Terry H. Jones

Farmer

Be Good to the Land and the Land will be Good to You. (Philip James Jones, 1821-1912)

FEB 11 2023

A Valentine to Our Mother Earth

by Terry Jones

We all share a common childhood experience - crafting a Valentine to our mother in appreciation of her love, care, and nurture. Our planet earth is like our mother. She provides the natural environment for our basic needs: healthy food, pure water, and clean air. If we make a mess, we get punished. Valentines are an expression of love and a desire to please those we love.

For 76 years, as a farmer, I have worked with Mother Earth to coax life from the soil - working with sunshine and rain to grow crops to nurture human life and to sustain our body and our spirit. It is a dance made beautiful when both partners are moving together in rhythm. A misstep by either can destroy the harmony. Being in the field, observing, studying, and adjusting practices is like the nurturing of a mother for her children. I am inspired by the natural world. Yes, Mother Earth is not perfect. Like our human mother, she can slip and fall, like a shifting fault line in the planetary bedrock that can quake and take lives.

This January, I traveled south to the region of Patagonia to learn lessons from the land and waters of southern Chile. With our local guides, Valentina and Alicia, we traveled along backroads, hiking trails, and on horseback.

I am inspired by the fierce love of the land by the shepherds of the *estancia* (ranches), the fishermen, and guides of Patagonia, where Argentina and Chile merge at the southern tip of the continent. They share a common bond of passion for Mother Earth. The land is vast without man-made boundaries – only mountains, big sky, fiords, and the Strait of Magellan.

Patagonians work together as they meet new ecological changes. The sheep and cattle ranchers are struggling with successive years of drought. Forage is sparse and prices for their products are falling. For fishermen, the ecology of the once pristine fiords is deteriorating as foreign salmon farming companies are intensively feeding the salmon and adding antibiotics and artificial coloring to turn the fish flesh pink. Native sea lions are slaughtered because they prey on the salmon. On an inspiring note, ecotourism with wise environmental safeguards is growing in Patagonia and boosting the local economy, while maintaining harmony with Mother Earth.

While in Chile, I reflected on the words of John F. Kennedy: *"Our most common link is that we all inhabit this planet. We all breathe the same air. We all cherish our children's future. And we are all mortal."*

We are fortunate in Connecticut. Mother Earth has given us natural resources for prosperity, if, we use them wisely. If, we keep our air and water clean, care for our rivers and Long Island Sound, steward our soils so we can grow healthy food, culture our forests, and grow more green in our cities, our Mother will respond with love.

We, in Connecticut, can support and take pride in the many institutions of science and education that provide a positive influence on the quality of our earth's environment. Noteworthy, in New

Haven, the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station welcomes graduate students, Fulbright scholars, and post-docs from around the globe to collaborate with their scientific staff and return home with knowledge and skills to repair Mother Earth and improve life for her peoples, plants, and animals. Likewise, the Yale School of the Environment sends forth hundreds of graduates to bring leadership to our global community. Many environmental organizations, to name a few: CT Audubon, CT Forest and Park Association, and CT Working Lands Alliance, advocate for wise policies to preserve a beautiful Connecticut.

This Valentine's Day, let's pause to count our blessings. Send our Mother Earth a Valentine of love. Now is the time to love Mother Earth, and she will love us and future generations.

Terry Jones is a fifth-generation Shelton farmer and grandfather. He serves as vice president of the Board of Control at the CT Agricultural Experiment Station, and Board Member at CT Working Lands Alliance, the Valley Community Foundation, and the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven.



Our Patagonia guide, Valentina with horse, Monona.